

This past week saw the House Armed Services Committee consider the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). As Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, I presented a group of amendments aimed at preserving and enhancing our military's ability to maintain readiness in a world with constantly arising threats. The marathon discussion began in the morning on June 5 and continued until 2:14 a.m. on June 6, covering a wide array of issues affecting our military programs and the men and women who serve in our all-volunteer force. The final version of the NDAA passed the committee by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 59-2, and I was pleased to see such a bipartisan showing of support for our servicemen and women.

As the NDAA moves to the full House for consideration, it is critical that our elected leaders not ignore an issue that is at the heart of any discussion on the future of our military, namely, the irresponsible, across-the-board budget cuts that went into effect in April, known as the sequester. It is imperative that these cuts be addressed in a way that allows our military to continue to be the strongest fighting force on the planet. I am increasingly concerned by the potential threats to our nation's readiness as a result of sequestration, and I believe the men and women of our all-volunteer force deserve our highest level of support, not continued uncertainty and diminishing capabilities. At the same time, many dedicated civil servants across the First District and the nation are receiving furlough notices, and [I rose on the House floor recently](#) to remind my colleagues and the White House that furloughing hardworking federal employees is not the only option to address the sequester. We must fix this.

Last week, the full House considered two important funding bills, the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act ( [H.R. 2216](#) ), and the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act ( [H.R. 2217](#) ).

Each of these bills provides FY14 funding for critical programs within specific departments of government, including funds for veterans' disability claims, which has a significant backlog. This is a problem that must be addressed in order to ensure that we are honoring our promise to our nation's veterans. The bipartisan passage of these bills was a refreshing moment in this Congress; I have said repeatedly that transparency and accountability in government spending is absolutely vital in order for us to properly address our nation's unsustainable fiscal woes. Taxpayers should be able to understand where their money is going and exactly why it is going there. I was pleased to see the House begin the appropriations process for FY14 in a transparent way that allowed for rational, public debate and comprehensive discussions about the fiscal path of our nation. These bills have now been sent to the Senate for its consideration.

The main streets of Virginia's First District are full of ideas to get our economy back on track, and your feedback is critically important to me as I serve you. I can be reached by telephone at (202) 225-4261, through my website ( [www.wittman.house.gov](http://www.wittman.house.gov) ), on Facebook ( [www.facebook.com/reprobwittman](http://www.facebook.com/reprobwittman) ), and via Twitter ( [www.twitter.com/robwittman](http://www.twitter.com/robwittman) ).